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Study Set on Security and Scientific Exchange

By DAVID BURNHAM
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WASHINGTON, May 4 — The National Academy of Sciences is about to begin a $750,000 study of the impact of national security controls on the transfer of modern technologies among the nations of the world.

The study is aimed at resolving some of the differences that continue to cause conflict between some leading United States scientists and the Reagan Administration on the transfer of the technologies such as advanced computers and lasers. The study will be financed by five agencies of the Federal Government and a consortium of professional organizations.

Chosen to head the new study was Dr. Lew Allen Jr., head of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, the nation's principal center for the exploration of distant space. He is a former director of the National Security Agency and a former chief of staff of the Air Force.

National Security and Inquiry

One indication of the continuing dispute over the appropriate role of the Government in the transfer of modern technologies is a debate to be held Friday between Richard N. Perle, Assistant Secretary of Defense for international security policy; Dr. William J. Perry, Under Secretary of Defense for research and engineering in the Carter Administration, and Bobby R. Inman, former director of the National Security Agency. The debate, sponsored by the Scientists Institute for Public Information, the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the Association of American Universities, is entitled "National Security and Scientific Inquiry."

The new study is to be partly financed by the Defense Department, the State Department, the Commerce Department, the Energy Department and the National Science Foundation. It is designed to complement a 1982 academy project led by Dr. Dale R. Corson, president emeritus of Cornell University, that examined the impact of communications among scientists on national security.

The Corson panel concluded that although substantial amounts of technology had been obtained by the Soviet Union, scientific exchanges, particularly the activities of universities, had played "a very small part."

Some of the efforts of the Reagan Administration to reduce the flow of sensitive technology to the Soviet Union have been criticized by scientists on the ground that in the long run they might damage the national security of the United States by throttling basic scientific research.

"Science is not going to progress unless it is free," said Dr. Corson, currently the chairman of the Government University Research Roundtable, a group sponsored by the Academy of Sciences and the Academy of Engineering.

"I hope the Allen panel can make the precise distinctions that are necessary so that our science can flourish and our national security be maintained," he said.

One recent event that led to increased concern among scientists was the reaction of the Defense Department to a conference in March of the Society of Photo-Optical Engineers. Shortly before the conference, officials of the Defense Department announced that a number of scientific papers, most of which contained no classified information, could not be presented in open meetings. Some of the photo-optical technology might be used used in space for military purposes.

Working with Leo Young, director of research and laboratory management in the Pentagon's Office of Research and Advanced Technology, the conference's sponsors worked out a number of special sessions at which attendance was limited to United States citizens and scientists who had been qualified by their embassies and who signed statements that the information contained in the papers would not be exported.

The Government contended that it had the authority to impose the restrictions at the conference under an amendment to the Freedom of Information Act, approved last year by Congress. The interpretation of the amendment has been questioned by the American Civil Liberties Union.